

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 2 remain pending and are currently amended. Claim 3 is canceled, and no claims are added.

Claims 1 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Okita et al., JP 2002-127817, in view of Meinershagen, U.S. Patent No. 4,556,862, and claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Okita et al. As mentioned above, claim 3 is canceled, thereby rendering its rejection moot. Regarding claims 1 and 2, applicants respectfully submit that these rejections should be withdrawn.

Both claims 1 and 2 describe a small-sized electrically-driven vehicle having an indicator, and, with the present amendments, claim 1 specifies that:

the indicator is mounted on an operation panel provided at the center of a steering handle of the vehicle, said operation panel being arranged almost horizontally on the top of a steering post arranged at the front of the vehicle, said steering handle having a grip arranged to protrude from both the left and right sides of the operation panel, and the indicator being arranged on the top surface of the operation panel,

and claim 2 specifies that:

the indicator is mounted on a panel provided at the center of a steering handle of the vehicle, said panel being arranged almost horizontally on the top of a steering post arranged at the front of the vehicle, said steering handle having a grip arranged to protrude from both the left and right sides of the panel, and the indicator being arranged on the top surface of the panel.

Applicants respectfully submit that the claims distinguish the invention from the asserted prior art for the following reasons:

First, note the mutual positional relationship between the eyes of the driver and the operation panel and steering handle in applicants' small-sized electrically-driven vehicle. For

vehicles that run only at low speeds, such as the present invention, the steering handle is arranged so that the rotational plane or surface is almost horizontal, and the operation panel is positioned horizontally on this steering handle. In an ordinary automobile, the rotational plane of the steering wheel is upright, which is suitable for driving at higher speeds, and the operation panel is positioned upright in front of the steering wheel. In an ordinary automobile, the steering wheel and the operation panel are arranged near the line-of-sight of the driver, who pays attention to the front view while driving the vehicle, thereby effecting an easy-to-see layout.

Conversely, for vehicles that run only at low speeds, such as a small-sized electrically-driven vehicle, the operation panel, which is not constantly monitored, is arranged more remote from the line-of-sight of the driver. Generally, in small-sized electrically-driven vehicles, there is no speedometer. Even in those small-sized electrically-driven vehicles that do have speedometers, the vehicles are not generally designed by considering whether the speedometer should be easy to monitor.

Therefore, one advantageous feature of the present inventive small-sized electrically-driven vehicle is that the turn direction indicator display on the operation panel is conspicuous and thereby more easily observed. Also, because of the typical posture of a driver of a small-sized electrically-driven vehicle when looking forward, the operation panel is far below the driver's eyes. However, with the present invention, even with the typical posture, the direction indicator is observed easily and reliably.

Further, as a result of outdoor lighting and near horizontal orientation of the operation panel, a driver will experience difficulty recognizing a prior art direction indicator, if it only comprised lights that were constantly turned on. This phenomenon is accentuated in small-sized electrically-driven vehicles that are used by the aged with weak eyesight, where additional

visibility is necessary. The repetition of illumination sequences where many lights are turned on and then simultaneously turned off is extremely useful in small-sized electrically-driven vehicles.

Thus, the indication of vehicle direction with applicants' lighting sequences in a small-sized electrically-driven vehicle is quite different from the indication of vehicle direction using indicators that are arranged outside of an ordinary automobile. In an ordinary automobile, a driver normally looks at the rear of the car in front of him/her; therefore, the direction indicator always exists in the normal view of the driver positioned behind. In comparison with the effect of adopting flickering sequences in such direction indicators, the effect of the present invention in small-sized electrically-driven vehicles is enormous.

Still, such lighting sequences, as in the present invention, have not yet been adopted in small-sized electrically-driven vehicles. Accordingly, claims 1 and 2 should be deemed non-obvious.

In view of the remarks above, applicants submit that the entire application is in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowability is now requested.

If necessary, the undersigned authorizes deducting any fees that may be due from Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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Enclosure: Petition for extension of time

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